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The Validity of a Holistic Scoring Rubric for Short Constructed Responses

In this study, we examine the validity of the scoring rubric used on the Georgia State Test of English Proficiency (GSTEP), an English proficiency test used for university admission and ESL course placement. The GSTEP tests for English proficiency in potential international undergraduates as an Admission test, and in currently enrolled graduates as an Orientation test. In the short answer portion of the writing section, the testtaker is given two reading passages and eight questions to answer. Their responses are scored holistically based on their content and language, each rated on a scale of 1-5. It is essential that this rubric be valid and reliable as we assess the reading ability in the constructed writing responses. We tested the validity of the current rubric through detailed analytic means. From 33 previously-rated short answer responses (20 were from Orientation and 13 were from Admissions), we extensively coded the short answer responses based on the completion, accuracy, and level of copying for each question. We then analyzed the relationship between our extensive ratings with the corresponding scores obtained through use of the rubric. The strong correlation between the two scores suggests that the rubric is valid. However, due to the prominence of the amount of copying in the short answer responses, we will conduct a follow up study analyzing the N-grams for each response in order to determine possible revisions in the questions/passages.

Keywords: GSTEP, N—Grams, Rubric, Rating, Validity, Coding